



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

the author never veers from a true Christian course, and he shows a first-hand knowledge of many profound scientific problems. The volume will be especially valuable for those—if there are still any such—who are apprehensive of science as an enemy to Christianity.

L. W. BATTEN

ST. MARK'S CHURCH  
NEW YORK CITY

---

### PATON'S COMMENTARY ON ESTHER

This recent volume of the invaluable *International Critical Commentary*<sup>1</sup> gives us the best commentary on Esther extant and is worthy to stand in the series of which it is a part. It is a careful and scholarly piece of work and will enhance its author's already good reputation. Professor Paton has included in his commentary the Aramaic and Greek additions to Esther, treating them not as a part of the book, but as early comments upon it, so that in range the commentary is the most complete, we believe, that has been published. The Hebrew text is regarded by our author as a unit with the exception of 9:20—10:3, which is believed to be an excerpt from an earlier chronicle. This excerpt was made by the author of Esther himself, who wrote his book to give an account of the origin of the feast of Purim which is stated in these verses. The composition of Esther is for good reasons placed after 135 B. C. The author is thought to be a Jew of the Dispersion living in Persia. A few of the statements of the book are confirmed by historical evidence, but it also contains many statements which are contradicted by the Greek historians, many of which are inconsistent with others in Esther itself, and many improbable. Professor Paton concludes that the book is not historical, and that it is doubtful if even a historical kernel underlies its narrative.

After reviewing the various theories of the origin of the feast of Purim which have been put forth, Paton concluded that it is probable that the feast was borrowed from Babylonia either directly or by way of Persia, though the precise Babylonian feast from which it is derived has not yet been determined.

The text of the narrative of Esther presents fewer difficult problems to the exegete than that of many books of the Old Testament, and its higher criticism is comparatively simple; Professor Paton has, accordingly, presented the textual criticism with a fulness without parallel in the volumes

<sup>1</sup> *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther*. By Lewis Bayles Paton, Ph.D., D.D. "The International Critical Commentary Series." New York: Scribners, 1908. xvii+339 pages. \$2.25.

of the series. It is interesting on this point to compare the Old Testament volumes of the series which have appeared. Gray in *Numbers* devotes three pages to textual criticism; Driver in *Deuteronomy*, none; Moore in *Judges*, five; H. P. Smith in the *Books of Samuel*, five; Harper in *Amos and Hosea*, seven; Briggs in the *Psalms*, thirty-two, several pages of which are devoted to the poetical form of the Psalter; Toy in *Proverbs*, three; Barton in *Ecclesiastes*, eleven; while Paton in *Esther* devotes forty-two pages to the textual criticism. In favor of this extensive treatment of the sources of the text of Esther is the fact that it has been one of the most popular of the Old Testament books among the Jews, and MSS of it have multiplied without number. In spite of this, however, the space devoted to the subject seems out of proportion.

Under "Interpretation" Professor Paton has given a very full list of the commentaries, both Jewish and Christian, which have appeared upon Esther. Here, too, however, historical material, which one would expect to find in a history of Jewish literature, but which one does not look for in a commentary, is introduced. This together with the full treatment of the textual material expands the "Introduction" to 118 pages, while the "Commentary" occupies but 188 pages. It is possibly well, in spite of this disproportion, for a scholarly pastor to have this material within his reach here; otherwise he might not have it at all.

Full as Professor Paton's text-critical notes are, they would have been of greater use to larger numbers of those who ought to use his commentary, if, instead of frequently giving the readings of the various versions in all the different languages, he had always given the Hebrew readings supported by the various versions with a list of the versions supporting each. It was quite fitting for him in his excellent "Text-Critical Apparatus to the Book of Esther" in the Harper Memorial volumes to give the readings of the versions as they stand, but many pastors who gather benefit from textual notes in which the Hebrew readings and versions supporting them are given, have neither the time nor the skill to translate back into Hebrew from the different languages.

These are, however, minor matters. The commentary places within the reach of every English reader a sane, competent, and scholarly guide to the best that is known concerning the book of which it treats, and ought to find a place in the library of every student of the Bible.

GEORGE A. BARTON

BRYN MAWR, PA.